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9. A NOTE ON NEST BUILDING, BEHAVIOUR OF WILD BOAR (*SUS SCROFA* LINNAEUS)

Among the two members of the family Suidae, the wild pig (*Sus scrofa*) is the only representative from South India. Prater (1980 THE BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS) reported the nest building behaviour of wild pig as follows: "the mother shelters them in a heaped-up mass of grass or branches which she builds before she litters". During the field studies in Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary, while searching for indirect evidences of wild animals in a three year old teak (*Tectona grandis*) plantation near Anappady, construction of an abandoned nest built by a wild pig was studied.

The nest was built at the centre of a teak plantation of about 5 ha in area. The whole plantation was covered by the weed *Chromolena odorata* growing more than 2 m in height. The basal portion of the nest was lined with uprooted grass to a height of 10-15 cm. Along with this,

eight pieces of teak branches and some *Chromolena odorata* twigs of one metre length were also found in the basal portion. The nest had an area of 2 m in diameter. The entrance to the nest was in the form of a tunnel of one metre height. The middle portion of the nest had a depression to the extent of 75 cm diameter and depth of 20 cm. The nest was positioned in between two live three year old teak saplings.

Even after elaborate search, no other nest was found in the teak plantation. Water was available within a distance of 200 m from the nest.

March 24, 1994

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10. ON THE RECOVERY OF A FOETUS FROM A SPERM WHALE *PHYSETER MACROCEPHALUS* LINNAEUS STRANDED AT CHETLAT ISLAND, LAKSHADWEEP

Though James and Panicker (1990) listed the strandings of the sperm whale 17 times from the Indian Seas no foetus was found in any of them. Usually sperm whales stranded are cut open to see whether any ambergris is present. This is the first time that a foetus was found in the body of a sperm whale stranded from the Indian Seas.

On 15-8-1990 a female specimen of 9.5 m length with body girth of 12 m was stranded at the Southern extremity of Chetlat Island in the Lakshadweep group of Islands. Earlier sperm whales have been stranded thrice at Chetlat Island (James and Panicker, op. cit.). The foetus was a female measuring 3.5 m in length and 2.3 m in girth and was laying in an abnormal position inside the uterus and this could have probably caused the death and subsequent stranding of the whale.

According to Berzin (1972) calving is almost round the year in sperm whale and the gestation period is 11-12 months. The largest embryos varied in length from 4.6 to 6.0 m and the smallest sucklings varied in length from 3.7 to 5.6 m. Average length at the time of birth is 4.0 to 4.2 m. Judging from the size of the present foetus we can say that it was near time.

We are most grateful to Dr. P.S.B.R. James, Director, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi for his kind interest and encouragement.

April 18, 1994

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11. FIRST RECORD OF THE ROSY PELICAN *PELECANUS ONOCROTALUS* LINNAEUS IN KERALA

The Rosy Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Linnaeus is recorded as a common winter visitor to Pakistan and North India, from Punjab to Assam, Andhra Pradesh and Madras. But, so far there is no record of this species from Kerala.

In the course of our routine field observation at Vellimukkuchali, a swampy area in Tirur taluk, Malappuram district, Kerala, on the morning of 18th December 1992 we noted eight birds floating in water. At first sight itself it was very much evident that they were pelicans. Since we have had field guides with us we identified them as Rosy Pelicans. Rose tinged white colour, long characteristic beak and marginal black feathers (primaries and secondaries) in the wings showed that Kerala got an addition to its list of birds. We observed them for about two hours. After two hours they flew upward, made 3-4 rounds there and slowly flew away

from our sight. The locals told us that the pelicans had arrived in the early morning that day.

After a few days we received information on the sighting of the same species from Arkulum lake, Trivandrum.

Recently, Kerala is being revisited by hitherto unrecorded birds. For example, we observed and photographed the Flamingos last year on 9th January 1991 at Ponnani.

February 5, 1993

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12. ROSY PELICANS *PELECANUS ONOCROTALUS* LINN., IN THE HIMALAYA

In May of 1992 I was resting at over 3050 m on the Patalsu mountain which is a 4250 m fermentation of a spur south of the prominent Sheeti Dhar range at the head of the Beas Valley separating the southern valleys of Kulu from the arid trans montane regions of Lahaul and Ladakh beyond.

It was a brilliant morning and updrafts had just started with the first clouds forming above each column of rising air. A wonderful day for large gliding birds like vultures, lammergeyers, eagles and storks and pelicans. Just as I thought of pelicans, I saw a tight group of eleven white birds which indeed were Rosy Pelicans! I must have watched them circling and going higher and higher for

full fifteen minutes till, as mere specks they flew west parallel to the mountain range.

This is perhaps what they normally do in their migration from the plains of India towards Central Asia. For great gliders like the Pelicans the snow range is in striking distance from the lowlands and the series of updrafts along the western flanks of the Dhauladhar Range overlooking Kangra and Punjat convenient for covering immense distances. As far as I know there are no records of Pelicans migrating across Tibet.

November 3, 1993

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13. SOUTHERNMOST RECORD OF COMMON POCHARD *AYTHYA FERINA* (LINNAEUS) AND TUFTED DUCK *AYTHYA FULIGULA* (LINNAEUS) IN MADURAI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

While conducting midwinter waterfowl counts during 1990 and 1991 Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* and Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* were sighted on three irrigation tanks. During 1990 the birds were sighted on Vellari Kanmai tank, about 20 km from Madurai and Urappanur Tank, a few kilometres south of Madurai. During 1991 about 400 Common Pochards were sighted in Kunnatur irrigation tank, east of Madurai.

Madurai is out of the known range of both the species. According to Ali and Ripley (1983) the species is seen decreasingly southward in the peninsula, irregularly to Karnataka and not recorded further south. Their southernmost record is from Pondicherry (Perennou 1989). The Tufted Duck was recorded as occurring in Madurai District (Nichols 1945) but there does not seem to be any record after that.